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## CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE

THE GO-TO HANDLING A CRISIS WITHIN  
YOUR CHAPTER



**DELTA UPSILON**  
INTERNATIONAL FRATERNITY







# DELTA UPSILON CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	4
What is a Crisis.....	5
What to do When a Crisis Happens.....	6
Dealing with the Media.....	8

## DELTA UPSILON INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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## FOREWORD

Delta Upsilon's Loss Prevention policies and programs aim to prevent crises from happening, but sometimes crises still occur. A large part of managing a crisis is how we communicate with others about it.

Each crisis is different and requires a different response. Sometimes that response is directed to the media, but it can also be directed to a number of different stakeholders (alumni, parents, campus administration, etc.). No matter the situation, working with Delta Upsilon's International Headquarters will help your chapter craft the appropriate response.

The purpose of this guide is to help your chapter know what steps to take when a crisis occurs and how to communicate through that crisis, whether that be to members, alumni, parents, media or other audiences.

## WHAT IS A CRISIS?

A crisis can be defined as a surprise, accident or unplanned event. Our response to a crisis will not only help us recount of the situation, it will shape the public perception of Delta Upsilon. In many cases, if we do not tell our story, someone else will. So, it is important for DU to quickly and proactively tell our own story.

In Delta Upsilon, a crisis can take many forms. Here is a list of possible crises your chapter may face:

- ✦ Injury/death of a member (even if injury/death doesn't involve a DU activity)
- ✦ Sexual assault/violence
- ✦ Hazing-related incident or allegation
- ✦ Questions from media/reporters
- ✦ Intolerance-related incident or allegation (i.e., racism, bigotry, anti-LGBTQ, anti-Semitic, misogyny/hyper-masculinity, other instances of bigotry)
- ✦ Investigation into chapter conduct by university or IFC
- ✦ Arrest of member or criminal charges filed against member
- ✦ Injury/death of a non-member at a fraternity-sanctioned event or on fraternity property
- ✦ Major fight or incident of violence involving chapter members or on fraternity property
- ✦ Property damage at chapter house
- ✦ Complaint filed regarding general chapter conduct
- ✦ Natural disasters (i.e. tornado, hurricane, fire, flood, etc.)

If an issue has any or multiple of the following characteristics, it is a potential crisis.

- ✦ Issue/incident that may impact the reputation of your chapter, Delta Upsilon or fraternities at large
- ✦ Media coverage anticipated
- ✦ May generate a response from campus community, university leadership, the International Fraternity, legislators or higher education influencers
- ✦ Chapter closure or other major sanctions being considered by university or International Fraternity



## WHAT TO DO WHEN A CRISIS HAPPENS

No chapter should feel like it is on their own during a crisis. IHQ staff is available 24/7 to assist chapters and advisors manage issues in a responsible and timely way. Our ultimate goal is to ensure the safety of our members and guests and to protect the operation and reputation of the chapter and its members. We will work in partnership with you to make sure everyone is safe and determine what happened.

Contact one of the listed officials as soon as possible with details of any crisis.

Initial reports of a crisis should be made to Nicole Belinsky Lepperd, Director of Chapter Development & Conduct. Media inquiries should be forwarded to Ashley Martin Schowengerdt, the Director of Communications. Justin Kirk, Executive Director, is the official spokesman of the Fraternity.

### MAIN IHQ CONTACTS:

- General IHQ email and phone: [ihq@deltatau.org](mailto:ihq@deltatau.org), (317) 875-8900
- Executive Director Justin Kirk: [kirk@deltatau.org](mailto:kirk@deltatau.org)
- Associate Executive Director Karl Grindel: [grindel@deltatau.org](mailto:grindel@deltatau.org)
- Director of Chapter Development & Conduct Nicole Belinsky Lepperd: [belinsky@deltatau.org](mailto:belinsky@deltatau.org)
- Director of Communications Ashley Martin Schowengerdt: [amartin@deltatau.org](mailto:amartin@deltatau.org)

### GENERAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT TIPS:

**If the crisis involves a crime, natural disaster, or a sick/injured/deceased person:**

1. Call 911.
2. Work with first responders to make sure everyone is safe and attended to.
3. If at the chapter facility or chapter/campus event, the chapter president should be in charge of the situation. If he is unavailable, another member of the Executive Board should take his place.
4. Take a head count of all members and/or guests to make sure everyone is accounted for. Having a phone tree is a good way to efficiently get a hold of everyone, as are group messages.
5. All members should work cooperatively and honestly with any law enforcement or first responders.
6. Call a chapter advisor to let them know what is happening.
7. Call your campus fraternity/sorority life staff to let them know what is happening.
8. If an emergency, call International Office or your chapter's staff liaison to let them know what is happening.
9. When the situation has calmed down, complete DU's Incident Report Form with all information you currently have. By providing as much information as possible and being honest, you are helping the situation be addressed in the best possible way. Honesty from the beginning is always the best policy. More information can be added as more is learned.
10. Ask all members to refrain from posting about the situation on social media or speaking about it with those outside of the situation. This will prevent the rumor mill from churning as information is still being learned. It also protects the privacy of those involved, as well as due process should it be a legal situation. Speculating what happened or pointing fingers helps no one.
11. Continue to work cooperatively with authorities, campus administration, advisors and IHQ staff as investigations continue.

12. If you feel parents or alumni need to be contacted, work with the IHQ staff to develop clear, consistent messaging.
13. Questions about fire/police operations/investigations should be directed to the appropriate public safety official.
14. If asked about the conditions of the injured, direct reporters to the appropriate public safety official or hospital. Because of medical privacy (HIPPA) laws, you cannot release any information.

**If the crisis involves an allegation, complaint filed, arrest or intolerance:**

1. Call a chapter advisor to let them know what is happening.
2. Call your campus fraternity/sorority life staff to let them know what is happening if they do not already know.
3. If an emergency, call International Office or your chapter's staff liaison to let them know what is happening.
4. Complete DU's Incident Report Form with all information you currently have. By providing as much information as possible and being honest, you are helping the situation be addressed in the best possible way. Honesty from the beginning is always the best policy. More information can be added as more is learned.
5. All members should work cooperatively with authorities, campus administration, advisors and IHQ staff as investigations happen.
6. Ask all members to refrain from posting about the situation on social media or speaking about it with those outside of the situation. This will prevent the rumor mill from churning as information is still being learned. It also protects the privacy of those involved, as well as due process should it be a legal situation. The desire to defend oneself or the chapter is normal, but it can often lead to speculation, pointing fingers and anger. Speculating what happened or placing blame helps no one.
7. If you feel parents or alumni need to be contacted, work with the IHQ staff to develop clear, consistent messaging.
8. Questions about police operations/investigations should be directed to the appropriate public safety official.

## DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Sometimes, a crisis will attract the attention of campus, local or national media. The job of the media is to get information and, if possible, pictures that tell a compelling story.

With print, digital and TV news, as well as social media, managing a crisis in the public eye can be tricky. However, there is no need to panic. IHQ staff is trained to help your chapter manage any media request.

### WAYS THE MEDIA MAY CONTACT YOU:

**In general, if a member of the media (including student media) reaches out about a crisis:**

1. Let IHQ staff know immediately before giving any response. You can directly contact Director of Communications Ashley Martin at [amartin@deltatau.org](mailto:amartin@deltatau.org) or (317) 875-8900.
2. Executive Director Justin Kirk is the official spokesmen of the Fraternity. All statements made should come from him and the International Fraternity.
3. Staff will work directly with media to provide any statement, including updates on the crisis.
4. The chapter president should serve as the chapter's point of contact. Should he receive a media request, he should forward it to IHQ, which will respond. Should a general chapter member or alumnus received a media request, he should forward it on to the chapter president who will share it with IHQ staff.

**If a reporter reaches out electronically (via email or social media) the chapter president has two options:**

1. Respond to the reporter by saying, "Thank you for reaching out. Please contact Delta Upsilon International Headquarters for a statement or to answer any questions." Provide the Director of Communication's direct email address or [ihq@deltatau.org](mailto:ihq@deltatau.org).
2. Forward the request and reporter's contact information directly to IHQ without responding to the reporter. IHQ will then reach out to the reporter.

**If a reporter calls a member of the chapter or shows up on campus:**

1. Never say "No comment." That statement is still a comment and makes it look like you/the chapter has something to hide.
2. It is ok to simply ignore the reporter. If in person, keep a straight face and walk away. Then tell your chapter president or IHQ immediately that you were contacted.
3. If you want to say something to the reporter, we suggest you politely say: "I am not the best person to answer your question. You should contact our chapter president or International Headquarters."
4. Always let IHQ know if you have been contacted by the media. Be prepared to provide the news outlet's name, and if possible, reporter's contact information.
5. Members of the media are allowed to be on public property. This can include sidewalks and streets. However, if the media tries to film or stop people on DU property, the chapter president should politely ask them to leave.
6. Make sure any staff members know not to speak to reporters. Sometimes, a cook, house director or handy man will answer the door and give more information than you may like.



## GENERAL CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS TIPS:

1. Direct all media inquiries to Delta Upsilon International Headquarters.
2. Never say “No comment.” That statement is still a comment and makes it look like you/the chapter has something to hide.
3. Nothing is ever “off the record.”
4. Even if a reporter emails you, that doesn’t mean they or a photographer won’t stop by the chapter property to take a picture to correspond with the article. Make sure the lawn is not cluttered or littered with trash. Make sure all signs, posters, flags and banners are taken down from windows as they can inadvertently make a statement.
5. All chapter members, alumni and advisors should refrain from posting about the situation on social media or speaking about it with those outside of the situation. This will prevent the rumor mill from churning as information is still being learned. It also protects the privacy of those involved, as well as due process should it be a legal situation. The desire to defend oneself or the chapter is normal, but it can often lead to speculation, pointing fingers and anger. Speculating what happened or placing blame helps no one.
6. When communicating with one another about the crisis, always do so in person or on the phone. Emails, text messages and social media posts can be saved and shared with those outside of the situation.
7. When communicating in person or on the phone about the crisis, be aware of your surroundings and who may be able to listen in on any conversations. Oftentimes, secondhand news can be reported.
8. All statements should come from IHQ. By having the DU Executive Director as the official spokesman, clear, consistent communication is shared. Having multiple voices sharing news muddies the water and will likely create more confusion and lengthen the news cycle.
9. Anything someone posts to social media can be used by a reporter. Be aware that previous posts not directly related to the crisis can be cited or shared.
10. Never point fingers, place blame or victim shame.
11. Even though it is advised not to speak to the media or others about the crisis, always work cooperatively with police, first responders, advisors, IHQ staff and university administrators.

